



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2008-142

Thursday, September 18, 2008

CONTACT: Patrick Gasper, Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

Budget calls for reinvestment in education

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster praised educators for “balancing the needs of today with tomorrow’s expectations” as she called for significant reinvestment in our PK-12 educational system to ensure Wisconsin’s place in the knowledge-based economy of our interconnected world.

“Public education in Wisconsin has been stretched to the limit,” she said. “Unless we reinvest in our PK-12 educational system and make our students world ready, Wisconsin will lose its competitive edge in the 21st century.”

Burmaster’s 2009-2011 education budget request lays out an ambitious plan to increase global literacy and competitiveness, increase student achievement, support rural school districts and special education programs, provide for library services, enhance teacher quality, and address school finance and revenue limits. The state superintendent’s budget calls for state funding of approximately two-thirds of public education costs, with an increase in overall school aids of 3.9 percent over the biennium. This increase is less than the current rate of inflation.

Global Literacy and Competitiveness

Recognizing that education is fundamental to workforce development, Burmaster’s budget calls for an initiative that prioritizes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Her STEM initiative targets curriculum development, school facility upgrades, student access, and teacher training in STEM content and 21st century instructional methods. Her budget seeks an environmental education consultant position to contribute to the knowledge base of each STEM discipline. She also seeks funding for a World Languages Initiative in Elementary Schools, expanded international education opportunities, stronger Advanced Placement grants, and increased support for gifted and talented pupils.

Increasing Student Achievement

Burmaster’s budget seeks full funding for the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education program and 4-year-old kindergarten start-up grants. New grant programs would address school safety, Heritage Language Learning and Tribal Language Revitalization, and homeless students. Burmaster seeks budget increases for Bilingual-Bicultural Education Aid; Preschool to Grade 5, alternative education, and school nurse grants; school breakfast and the Wisconsin School Day Milk Program; and school lunch matching reimbursement. Most of these programs support the Milwaukee Public Schools’ efforts to increase student achievement. Additionally, this budget maintains the mathematics achievement grants for Milwaukee and aid to high-poverty school districts.

(more)

Advancing Rural Wisconsin Initiative

Sparsity aid in the 2007-09 budget provided \$3,644,600 for rural school districts, which resulted in per pupil payments prorated at 45 percent of the authorized amount. Burmaster's budget would fully fund the estimated eligible costs for sparsity aid. Her rural transportation aid package would increase all per pupil reimbursement rates, allow additional transportation aid payments if there are funds remaining after statutorily defined rates are paid, and allow school districts to claim refunds of the state motor vehicle fuel tax.

Special Education

The budget would provide an increase in special education categorical aid to maintain the 2008 fiscal year level of reimbursement to school districts at 28.8 percent of eligible costs. Without the increase, the state reimbursement rate for special education costs would drop to 25.5 percent. Burmaster's budget would fully fund the High Cost Special Education Categorical Aid Program, which provides aid to school districts providing services to students with severe or multiple disabilities whose costs exceed \$30,000 per child. The special education budget also includes outreach and other resources for the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Wisconsin Educational Services Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Libraries

Current law requires the DPI to include a 13 percent index level of funding for public library systems. System aid is about 8.2 percent for the current fiscal year. In addition to increased aid for public library systems, the budget would maintain the current level of services for BadgerLink, the state's on-line library; add funding to provide curriculum-based information databases to help students complete school assignments; fully fund library service contracts; and provide funding to cover 50 percent of statewide interlibrary loan costs.

Teacher Quality

To prepare for the increasing number of Wisconsin educators who are nearing retirement age and critical shortages in some subject areas, Burmaster's budget calls for a new Teacher Recruitment Loan Forgiveness Program at the Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB) for high-needs public schools. Her budget also supports increased funding for HEAB's Minority Teacher Loan Program to help recruit and retain a diverse, high-quality teaching corps. The budget seeks funding for development and maintenance of an online Wisconsin Educator Licensing System, funding to maintain the state's commitment to make grant payments to teachers who are certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or through the Wisconsin Master Educator Assessment Process, and repeal of the Qualified Economic Offer provision related to teacher collective bargaining.

School Finance and Revenue Limits

In addition to funding approximately two-thirds of partial school costs, Burmaster's budget would provide revenue limit flexibility for all school districts by increasing the per pupil revenue limit adjustment to \$335 in 2010 and to \$350 in 2011 to better reflect rapidly increasing fixed costs. The budget also would increase the per pupil low revenue ceiling, allowing some low-spending districts to increase their revenues beyond the annual allowable per pupil adjustment without going to referenda.

"We all know times are tight, and the 2009-2011 biennial budget will be no exception," she said.

"While we won't be able to do everything I've proposed for education, we can begin the reinvestment that our schools and communities need to keep our families, our children, and our state competitive in the 21st century. By working together, we can make sure that education remains Wisconsin's top priority."

###

NOTES: Highlights from State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster's State of Education speech are attached. The full address is available on the Department of Public Instruction news release website <http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/prmenu.html>. The 2009-2011 budget narrative is available at <http://dpi.wi.gov/pb/index.html>. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_142.pdf.



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster

Highlights from State of Education Address

Thursday, September 18, 2008 — State Capitol Rotunda

MADISON—Today, State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster delivered her 2008 State of Education address. Some highlights from the address follow.

Public education in Wisconsin has been stretched to the limit. Wisconsin's dedicated educators have been resilient in balancing the needs of today with tomorrow's expectations. Unless we reinvest in our PK-12 education system and make our students world ready, Wisconsin will lose our competitive edge in the 21st century.

Today, I am proposing a state education budget that significantly reinvests in our PK-12 system. It is a budget that commits to two-thirds state funding, brings local property taxpayer relief, and prioritizes early childhood education, small class sizes, global literacy, and teacher recruitment and compensation.

It is a budget that addresses increasing child poverty, the rising cost of transportation, increasing populations of English-language learners, the high costs associated with special education, and increases support for our public libraries and our smaller, rural school districts. And, a budget that, for the first time in 15 years, provides real revenue limit relief for all our schools.

Quality education begins in early childhood and includes: rigorous and relevant academic standards aligned with postsecondary and workforce expectations; world languages starting in elementary school; respect for heritage and tribal languages; a strong emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); the arts, gifted and talented, career and technical and international education; and meaningful connections between education and the working world, including service learning, youth apprenticeship, and guidance for students as they prepare career pathways.

Although our students have been among the most successful in the nation for the past century and our state is a leader in high school graduation rates, that's still not enough when one out of every 10 Wisconsin high school students fails to graduate and achievement gaps persist. We must bring people together around our shared value and responsibility to raise student achievement and close the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and their peers. In this 21st Century, we must graduate every child world ready, Wisconsin.

We must create a collaborative agenda that supports our growing numbers of children in poverty and children of color in Wisconsin. We must lift up all the children of this generation – not divide them against each other. Then – and only then – will we truly realize the potential of a public education system that can preserve our American democracy, secure economic prosperity, and ensure justice and compassion in civic life. That is our New Wisconsin Promise.

###